

LOWLY SERVICE**NO. 2829****A SERMON****INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 3, 1903****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON****ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 12, 1886**

“This is the service of the families, the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens: and they shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, his covering, and the covering of the badgers’ skin that is above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the hangings of the court, and the hanging for the door of the gate of the court, which is by the tabernacle and by the altar round about, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and all that is made for them: so shall they serve.”
Numbers 4:24-26

THIS is the gist of the whole matter, “This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens: and they shall bear....so shall they serve.” The Gershonites were part of the tribe of Levi, which God selected, instead of the firstborn of all Israel, to serve Him in a very special manner. They were to act as the representatives and substitutes for all the firstborn, who were set apart as the Lord’s in a very peculiar sense.

The Levites were, therefore, to be regarded as the firstborn—a name which is applied by the apostle Paul to all the regenerate when he speaks of “the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.” Jesus Christ is the true Firstborn, and all believers are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Him who is “the firstborn among many brethren.”

The chapter we read tells us how the Levites were to be consecrated to their service. They were to be sprinkled with the water of separation, and both their bodies and their clothes were to be washed with water. “Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD,” is an injunction that is still binding upon believers. We need to have both the water and the blood applied to us to prepare us for our solemn life-service as the consecrated Levites of God. “Ye are God’s clergy,” says the apostle, according to the original. All who believe in Jesus, all the twice-born, all who are washed in His precious blood, all who are set apart by the Holy Spirit, are God’s clerics, dedicated to His service even as the Levites were of old.

Besides this, the Levites had all the hair of their bodies shaved off, as if to show us that, in the day when we are consecrated to God, even our external life becomes changed. That which appertained to our old flesh is taken away, and if there is to be, in the future, any beauty or ornament to our manliness, it must be a new growth, springing out of that body which has been dedicated unto God, but all our old comeliness is turned to corruption, and that wherein we once gloried is altogether removed.

Judge you, my brethren and sisters, how far you are true Levites unto God. This is what you should be, and this is what you are, unless, indeed, you are reprobates.

It is worthy of note that these Levites, although they were all equally consecrated, had not all exactly the same work to perform. God is not the God of uniformity. There is a wondrous unity of plan and design in all that He does, but there is also an equally marvelous variety. He did not command all these sons of Levi to carry one particular vessel, or order them to bear one special curtain or board belonging to the tabernacle, but He divided unto every man his own work, and one had to do this, and another had to do something else.

There are some of the Lord's servants whom He raises up to teach, and preach, and exhort and guide. These may, for the moment, be compared, in a certain fashion, to the sons of Aaron, though the type must not be pressed too far. But the Lord has also a large number of His own dear children who do not open their mouths to speak for Him in public, and who could not fulfill the duties of leaders in His church. Shall they be left without any service?

They have but one talent, they have a shoulder, which is strong enough to bear burdens of the Lord, though they have not much power in their head to think, or a fluent tongue with which to speak. Is there no office for them to fill? Shall all the body be a mouth? If so, what a vacuum there will be! Surely there must be, in a well-ordered body, eyes, feet, hands, shoulders, as well as the open mouth and the speaking tongue.

So God has appointed to many of His servants a position and a work like that of the Gershonites, "They shall bear: so shall they serve." I must not, however, forget to remind you that all the servants of our King are burden-bearers. None of us may hope to go to heaven unless we are willing to take His yoke upon us, and to learn of Him, but there are some, who are not called to speak or preach, but whose special function it is to patiently bear the burdens of life, the burdens of the sanctuary, the burdens of the church of God, and so to be accepted of Him as a living sacrifice in that particular way. I am now going to try to speak of such and to such burden-bearers.

I. My first remark is that MANY OF THE LORD'S OWN PEOPLE ARE SIMPLY BURDEN-BEARERS, like these Gershonites.

Let none of them be discouraged or dissatisfied because that is all they are, for the Lord still needs burden-bearers, even as, in the days of His flesh, He sent word to the owner of the ass on which He wished to ride through Jerusalem, "The Lord hath need of him." If the tabernacle is to be moved through the wilderness, all the holy vessels and furniture must also be moved. There must be somebody to carry them, and happy and blessed is that man who willingly yields his back to bear the burdens of the house of the Lord, and counts it an honor that he is allowed to do so.

Well now, among the burden-bearers of the Lord, *the burdens are very various*. There are some of His servants who are called to bear the burden of a very laborious life. I am sorry for some of my brethren, when I get an opportunity to speak with them, because the hours of their toil are so long, and the strain of their service appears to be bringing them to a state of extreme feebleness of body, and sometimes they also get to feel despondency of spirit by reason of the excessive weariness which their almost incessant toil entails.

I know some beloved brethren, to whom the Master would not say a single angry word, if He even saw them asleep in the Tabernacle. I have often thought of what He said when His disciples slept, not when He was preaching, but when He was doing even more than that, when, in Gethsemane He was praying even unto a bloody sweat. He did say, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" Yet, in His amazing pity, He added, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

It is still so. It is a pity that our present-day society, adapting itself more and more to a killing pace, works many men far too much as a general rule, and upon some of them, the stress of labor comes so heavily as almost to amount to actual slavery.

Yet, my brethren and sisters, albeit we would sympathize with you to the great degree, if, in the order of providence, you are called to bear that burden, you will find it to be the part of wisdom to accept it as a burden from the Lord. I know it may sometimes be looked upon, and justly so, as the oppression of men, and in that light it is crushing, but if you can see at the back of that oppression, the eternal purpose of God, it will greatly tend to lighten your heavy load, or it will strengthen you to bear it.

The poor Christian slave, in the olden times, although He might long to be a free man, yet often found, in his little hut at night, no small comfort by saying, "If, in the providence of God, I am a slave, and cannot escape, I will bear even this as being permitted by my heavenly Father, and seek to glorify God even as a slave." So, you see, there are some who have to bear the burden of labor. They might,

perhaps, escape from it if they did wrong, but they dare not do wrong, they scorn to do it, and so, their burden becomes a burden from the Lord.

How many others there are who have to bear the daily burden of pain! Oh, how many daughters of pain do I know, and sons of affliction—perhaps even from their birth the subjects of some grievous infirmity which has cast a shadow over their whole lives! There lies, at Dundee, at this present moment, a man who has been confined to his bed, I think it is now fifty-six years. I have his photograph at home, and the friend who sent it to me wrote, “I send you the likeness of the happiest man in Dundee, and one of the most useful too, for he is a great soul-winner though he cannot raise himself from a constantly prostrate position.” He talks so sweetly of Christ and of the upholding power of divine grace, that he leads many to put their trust in Jesus Christ.

All over this land there are bed-ridden men and women who are the saintliest among the saints. It is an atrocious lie that some have uttered when they have said that the sickness is a consequence of the sufferer’s sin. I could not select, out of heaven, choicer spirits than some whom I know who have not for twenty years left their bed, they have lived nearer to God than any of us, and have brought Him more glory than any of us. Although we deeply sympathize with them, we might almost covet their suffering because God is so greatly glorified in them.

All over the world there is a brave band of these burden-bearers. I think, sometimes, that they are like soldiers who are on night duty. The sentinels must not sleep, lest the enemy should attack the camp unawares. The altar must never lose the glow and heat of its holy fire, and the lamp of the sanctuary must never be permitted to go out, so these sufferers, as they lie, night after night, watching the long and weary hours, keep the lamp of prayer brightly burning and the incense of intercession perpetually ascending to the Most High, so that never is the earth without the sweetening influence of saintly supplication. Their main business, like that of the Gershonites, is to serve God by bearing burdens.

Need I describe all the burdens that the saints on earth have to carry? There are some who bear the burden of poverty. A very large proportion of the excellent of the earth can be found among the poor of the earth—poor in spirit as well as poor in pocket, and “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

It is their constant portion to struggle and to toil hard to provide things honest in the sight of all men, but it does seem, with some, as if they could never rise out of a condition of bitter, grinding poverty. Well, if it must be so, let them feel and say, “As it hath happened thus unto us, we are like the families of the Gershonites, whose service was to bear burdens.”

Some children of God are called to bear the very heavy burden of reproach. They have done no wrong, and yet they are the subject of the jest and jeers of the ungodly. They have been faithful to Christ and their own conscience, but they are misunderstood and misrepresented. Their little peculiarities, which are scarcely faults, are exaggerated into crimes. A word which fell from their lips, perhaps too hastily, is caught up and echoed and re-echoed against them a thousand times. Men make them offenders for a word, and eat them up, as David says, “as they eat bread.”

I have known godly wives suffer thus from ungodly husbands, and oftentimes, a dear girl, who is brought to the Savior, finds herself as a speckled bird in the family. All that can be said against Christians, and all that can be said against hypocrites who are, unhappily, too often found in Christian churches, will be contemptuously cast at her, and she has to bear it all, patiently enduring reproach for Christ’s sake.

If this is God’s will concerning us, we ought not to endeavor to avoid it, but say, “Well, be it so. If somebody must be smitten for Christ’s sake, here is my cheek ready for the smiting. If there is a handful of mud that is meant for a Christian, let it fall upon me. If the saints of God are to be scoffed at and scorned, why should I be allowed to escape the insults?”

There was a king of the Crusaders, who, when they wanted to crown him in Jerusalem, spurned the golden coronet which they set upon his brow, for he said, “Why should I wear a crown of gold where my Lord and Master wore one of thorns?” Happy will you be if He shall enable you to say, as you look up to Him—

*“If on my face for Thy dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If Thou remember me.”*

There are some who have to bear this burden, so they had better bear it without wincing, for this is the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve by bearing burdens.

I believe that some of God’s people have to bear the burdens of this wicked world. In the order of providence, their lot is cast in the midst of the ungodly. Even in their own home, they can scarcely eat a meal without hearing blasphemy, and if they go down the court or street in which they live, especially of an evening, they cannot help being vexed with the sight and sounds of sin.

There are some of us who can be very glad and merry, for we have naturally great elasticity of spirit, yet we are bowed down, day after day, by the apostasy of the professing church of this present age, and by the way in which everything is followed except Christ. Every kind of false doctrine is popular nowadays, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ is derided as old-fashioned and out of date, and I know not what. Sometimes, the very bread we eat seems bitter, and the air we breathe is contaminated, because of the sin that is everywhere around us.

Well, dear friends, whenever you feel depressed and burdened on this account, so that you go like one who misses the light of the sun, say to yourself, “It must be so, this is what must happen to those who are of an earnest, burning spirit. They must be consumed with grief by reason of the iniquities of the times, for it is appointed unto the families of the Gershonites that they shall serve by bearing burdens, and this is our burden.”

I might say much more upon this head, but I will not, for you all know that the burdens which God puts upon His children, or allows others to lay upon them, are very many and very varied. But this is the comfort of it, *their burdens are all for the Lord*. If they are in a right state of heart, this burden-bearing is true service for the Lord.

Remember how Peter wrote, “For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called.” If the buffeting comes upon you for Christ’s sake, you are, in some sense, made partakers of His sufferings, and you shall also be partakers of His glory.

A true child of God lives wholly for God. He is not merely a Christian when he goes up to the place of worship, and sings the praise of the Lord, but he seeks to live for God as soon as he opens his eyes in the morning, and until he closes them again at night. It is for God that he eats and drinks and for God that he buys, and sells, and works, and gives, or saves, or does whatever it is right for him to do.

The Levite of old had no business to do in the world but the business of God, and the true Christian is in the same condition, for though he keeps a shop, or ploughs the fields, he keeps shop for Jesus, and ploughs the fields for Jesus. He is not his own master, but he is the servant of Another, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is his joy to labor faithfully as a steward and a servant on behalf of his Master.

I wish all Christians realized this truth. We have far too many professors who make their religion into a kind of off-hand farm. They cultivate it a little during the odds and ends of their time, but their chief business lies with the world. Brothers and sisters, there is no good to be gained by a religion of that kind. If you give God only the apple peeling of your life, He will give you simply the parings of religion, and they are generally very sour, but he who gives the whole fruit of his life to God shall receive from God the wines on the lees well refined, the choicest juice of the richest clusters of Eshcol shall be set to his happy lips.

Blessed is the man whose very heart is in the ways of the Lord, and who has God’s ways within his heart. May each one of us be such a man, for he is a happy man—a burden-bearer, but all his burdens are for his Lord.

And notice further, under this head, that *the burdens which are borne for the Lord educate the bearer*. I should suppose that the man who carried the golden candlestick knew more about that candlestick than anybody else did, at least it ought to have been a hint to him to study its typical meaning. As he bore that precious burden, it should have been his desire that his brethren should know what it was that he was bearing, and also what was its spiritual significance.

And in the service of God, this I know, whatever may have been the case in the typical instance before us, it is a fact that whenever God puts a burden upon the shoulders of any of His children, it is an educational process. We always learn much more by our griefs and woes than by anything else. God has often produced in us much richer and sweeter fruit by pruning than by any other process of His divine husbandry.

Take care, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord, and the burdens of the Lord, that ye cry unto Him, “Teach us, Lord, by this affliction, make this pain or this poverty to be a means of instruction to us, make this burden to be the means of our growth in grace, part of our spiritual training for a better world.”

II. There is much more that might be said upon this point, but I must pass on to the second head, which is that **THE LORD HAS MADE APPOINTMENTS CONCERNING THESE BURDEN-BEARERS.**

First, *He thought upon them*, though they were but burden-bearers. Here is a whole chapter about them, and there are other chapters about these Gershonites, and Kohathites, and Merarites. The Lord directed Moses to write all this about them. Possibly you have been thinking that the Lord only recollects apostles, and great leaders in His church, but it is not so. He remembers the burden-bearers, the rank and file are dear to Him.

“The Lord knows them that are his,” whatever position they may occupy, and though some of you may have to go from this service to a very poor home, and though others of you have only crept out from your bed for a little while, and will soon have to be back there to endure new pains, and though you feel as if all that you had to do was to lie and suffer—well, the Lord knows all about it.

He is thinking of you burden-bearers who are so much like His Son, the great Burden-bearer, if He could forget all others, He would not forget you. You have to take up your cross daily, as your Lord took up His cross, and God takes delight in you, for you are very dear to His heart. Do not think that it can be otherwise, but comfort yourself with these words, the Lord remembered them.

More than that, *the Lord had appointed each of these burden bearers*. You take up an odd coin, and you read on it, “George IV, by the grace of God, king of Great Britain.” Well, I really do not think that the grace of God had much to do with that appointment, but if any of you Christians sweeps a crossing, you might say, “Thomas Jones, by the grace of God, crossing-sweeper,” or if the poorest Christian woman goes out washing, she might say, “Sarah Smith, by the grace of God, washerwoman,” for if you are in your right position, and bearing the burden which God has allotted to you, then you are in your place by divine appointment!

It makes a person wonderfully happy if he knows that his occupation is according to divine appointment. It has been well said that if there were two angels in heaven, and God had two works to be performed by them and He said to one of them, “You go down to earth, and rule a kingdom,” and to the other, “You go down, and sweep a crossing,” the angels would be equally pleased to do their Master’s will, for it is their delight to “do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.”

If any of you think that a very prominent position—a place of great usefulness and responsibility—is much to be desired, well, I would not recommend you to covet mine. I am satisfied to occupy it, for I believe the Lord has called me to this position, but sometimes when I go home with a very heavy heart through the many crushing cares of this great church, I cry unto God, “Woe is me that ever I should have been called to such a post,” yet rejoicing all the while that I can say, with the apostle Paul, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.”

If you, my brother, have a little company of about a hundred people to deal with, be perfectly satisfied. Or if, my sister, you have a class of ten or a dozen girls to teach, be content with that number, and do the best you can to glorify God in your own proper place. Depend upon it, if you changed your burden for mine, you would not be able to bear it, and if I had yours, I dare say it would not fit my back so well as my own does.

Not only did the Lord appoint the man who was to bear the burden, but He also appointed the burden for each man to bear. In the twenty-seventh verse, we read, “At the appointment of Aaron and his sons shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their burdens, and in all their service: and ye shall appoint unto them in charge all their burdens.”

They had not to choose for themselves what they would carry. One might have said, “I will carry the golden candlestick,” whereas it might have been his part to carry some of the curtains or hangings, at all events, they had nothing to do with that matter. They had simply to do what they were told. One word that the Christian church needs to spell, in these days, for she is very apt to forget it, is the word, “subjection.” Be ye brethren, subject one to another, and be ye all subject unto Christ.

But we do like to pick our work, and choose our burdens. One says, “I like to do my work in my own way. I do not intend to drop into any kind of order and regulation.” I do not know that I am speaking personally of anybody here. As far as I am concerned, I am quite satisfied with you, but I know that in many places, Mrs. So-and-so won’t do this, she would have been quite willing to do something else, and brother So-and-so is hurt because he is not called upon to do that.

Now, if brother So-and-so would only be eager to take the lowest place, we could readily accommodate him, but his great ambition is to be over all the rest of his brethren, and he is not at all qualified for such a position as that.

Let us all ask the Lord to cast out that evil spirit, and then to tell us what He would have us carry. “Lord, what wilt thou have me do?” Down goes my shoulder ready to bear the God-appointed burden. “Send me to the top of the mountains, or to the bottom of the sea, only say what Thy will is. It is all Thy work, and I will gladly do it. My cry is, ‘Here am I, send me,’ before I know where I am to go, or what I am to do. If I am but fitted for Thy service, Lord, send me.” Oh, that we all had more and more of this spirit!

Beside the divine appointment of the man, and the divine appointment of the burden for him to bear, there was also *the divine appointment of the time of each man’s service*. These Gershonites were to be numbered “from thirty years old and upward until fifty years old.” I am not going to say to any of you, “Wait till you are thirty years of age before you begin to serve the Lord.” No, no, no, you can do a great deal of good work long before you are thirty, and long after you are fifty, let us hope, but this is the lesson for you, you have only to carry your burden for a certain length of time.

The God, who appointed you to bear it, also determined when you were to begin to bear it, and when you are to leave off bearing it. When God says you are only to have ten troubles, the devil cannot make eleven of them, and you cannot reduce them to nine. Every particle of bitterness that is to go into your cup is dropped out with all the care of a qualified dispenser, and there will not be one drop more of bitterness in your cup than the Lord knew was necessary to make the medicine just what it should be. I delight in this truth, and I hope that you also do. It is an old-fashioned doctrine, and this is an old-fashioned verse—

*“Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He bids, I cannot die;
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit.”*

Everything is appointed and determined, not by blind fate, but by an all-wise predestination. The wheels of providence do not crush the believer, for they are full of eyes, so that, as they revolve, they work our lasting good, and never do us harm. I hope all the burden-bearers here will believe this blessed

fact, that the Lord has appointed to all His burden-bearers the burdens they are to bear, and the time they are to bear them.

III. Lastly, and but briefly, EACH BURDEN-BEARER MUST FEEL THE SACREDNESS OF HIS OFFICE.

All these Gershonites, though only bearers of burdens, were ordained by God. There is a great deal of fuss made nowadays, about “ordaining” a minister. I was never “ordained” by mortal men, for I did not believe in having their empty hands laid on my head. If they had any of them, had any spiritual gift to impart to me, I would have been glad to receive it, but as they had nothing to give me, I could not accept it. I believe that every true Christian is ordained of God to his particular work, and in the strength of that divine ordination, let him not bother his head about merely human forms and ceremonies, but just keep to his proper work, and shoulder his own burden.

But they were all to feel that this ordination by God made their service a very solemn thing. He who carried a pot, or a pair of snuffers, or a flesh-hook, was to feel that what he carried was sacred, and that he was carrying it in the name of God, and therefore, that he was to do it in a solemn manner. So the first command to the burden-bearers was, “*Be ye clean.*” They were to wash themselves, and to wash their clothes.

O sirs, if you mean to be foul, go and serve the devil! If you want to behave dishonestly, or lewdly, or selfishly, or unkindly, be a servant of Satan, because you will not do him any discredit, but do not pretend to serve God with those dirty hands of yours. What have you to do with touching that which is “all of blue” when you are all black? What right have you to drink out of the holy vessels of the sanctuary when your lips are leprous with iniquity? This is the most horrible thing about the church of God—that there should ever be in it unworthy men.

I have thanked God for Judas Iscariot many and many a time. I am glad he got in among the apostles because we should have given up all our church life if we had not seen that, even with Christ for the Pastor, and with His twelve apostles around Him, one of them was a devil. It will always be so, but oh! I do beseech you who are burden-bearers for Christ, be ye clean. Go again every day to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and wash there, and may the great Master take the basin and the ewer, as He did for His disciples, and wash your feet, that you may be “clean every whit”!

They were not only to be clean, but they were also to be *very reverent in their service*. It was not to be a kind of happy-go-lucky, hit-or-miss service, they must never lift up a corner of the covering to look curiously at anything that they carried, nor must they, even by their actions, seem to say, “We can carry these things anyhow.” Oh, no! but there must be real reverence about all their service, and one man must take one part, and another another, with many a prayer and a continual looking up to that God whose holy vessels they were to carry on the behalf of His people, through the wilderness.

God still desires to have reverent servants, may He deliver us from a flippant Christianity! Oh, that He would save us, not from holy mirth, but from the careless handling of divine things! It is an awfully solemn thing to be a servant of the Lord of hosts. Jacob said, “How dreadful (how awe-full) is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” He felt that the presence of JEHOVAH was something that filled him with awe, and for us to stand before the God, who is a consuming fire, is no subject for trifling.

At the same time, although their service was to be reverent, *they were always to be ready for it*. They could never tell when they would have to take up their burdens and march. Sometimes, at break of day the trumpet sounded, “Up, and away,” for the cloudy-fiery pillar was moving. At other times they may have been sitting at their noon meal, and as they looked up, they perceived that the pillar of cloud had begun to move, so, as soon as the priests had taken down the coverings, they must pick up their burdens, and then, each man in his appointed place, the load was to be carried till the cloud stopped.

The special thing for us to remember is that they were always to be ready. Our friends, over at the Southwark fire station, some of whom are members of this church, tell me that they are always ready to go off to any fire that may break out. I have asked them, “When are you off duty?” and they have

replied, “Never, if we come to the Tabernacle, or go anywhere else, we are always to be on the watch for the signal that would tell us that a fire is raging. No matter what we are doing, at dead of night, or in the dawning of morning, eating our bread, or even if we are asleep, we must be up in a moment as soon as the call is given.”

I have heard of a certain parson who was out hunting one day, and someone said to him, “It does not look right for a servant of Christ to be wearing a red jacket like yours.” “Oh!” said he, “you see, I was off duty at the time.” But when is a Christian minister off duty? When is any Christian off duty? We are never off duty, and we are to count it a high privilege that we are always to be ready, at the summons of our Master, to take up our burden, and bear it wherever He pleases.

Finally, *they were to do it cheerfully*. It is not recorded, in God’s Word, that any one of these sons of Gershon ever complained that his load was too heavy. I do not even read that one of them said, “Look, Moses, I am a full-grown man, yet Ithamar has bidden me carry only a tent-pin. I think I ought to be allowed to carry one of the boards of the tabernacle, at the very least.”

There is no record that any one of them ever talked like that. Their load was neither too heavy nor too light. In like manner, brethren, let us drop into our proper places. He, who has redeemed us with His precious blood, and made us to be the firstborn among men, calls us to this service or to that. It is not our place to reason why, or to make reply, but to obey our Master’s orders at once, and to do for Him anything, great or small, which He may command us.

I greatly fear that some of you are not the servants of my Master. Then, you are serving another lord, and his burdens, though they may seem little or nothing to you now, will grow, and grow, and grow, and grow, until they sink you into the bottomless pit forever. Have you never heard of the man who served a tyrant master? The tyrant called at the man’s smithy, and said to him, “Make me a chain, find your own iron, and out of it make a chain for me.” “How long shall I make it, your majesty?” “Make it as long as you like, and keep on at it till I come here again.”

He worked for twelve months, and forged a long, long chain. When the tyrant came, he gave him nothing for what he had done, but he said, “Make it as long again.” So the poor man had to go on hammering away at the chain, and when he had finished it, what do you think was the payment he received? The tyrant said, “Bind him, hand and foot, with this chain, and hurl him down into the abyss, bound by the very chain that he has himself forged.” That is what the black prince of hell will do with you who serve him. Therefore, fly from him while you may.

“I will think about it,” says one. You will never get away from him if you act like that. The only way to escape from the devil is to run away from him without giving him any notice. Just as you are, at this moment, escape for your lives, look not behind you, for the only hope for you is to flee at once from the wrath to come. Do as the prodigal son did, say, “I will arise and go to my father,” and then, like him, rise up at once, and go. He who deliberates about such a matter as this is lost. It is now or never with you. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” The Lord help us all to escape, this very hour, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

NUMBERS 8:5-22

Verses 5-6. *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them.*

These men were to be the servants of God, they are the type of God’s elect—a people set apart unto divine service, to be zealous for good works. “Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them.” That is just the way that God the Holy Ghost takes Christians out of the mass of mankind and cleanses them.

7-8. *And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let then shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. Then let them take a young bullock with his meat offering, even fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering.*

There are still, typically, these three things in the cleansing of God's people—the blood, the water, and the razor. There is blood, the emblem of the putting away of sin by Christ's atoning sacrifice, the water, typical of the Holy Ghost, by whom the power of sin is overcome, and then that razor, cutting off that which grows of the flesh, that which was their beauty and their glory is all taken away from them. There are some of God's people who have not felt much of that razor, but if they are to serve God perfectly, it must be used. "Let them shave all their flesh."

9-12. *And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together: and thou shalt bring the Levites before the LORD: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD. And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the LORD, to make an atonement for the Levites.*

There is no true way of serving God without the atonement. Leave that out, and you have left out the vital part of the whole. What service can we render to the Most High if we begin by disloyalty to Him whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin, even His dear Son?

13-14. *And thou shalt stand the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the LORD. Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine.*

We are to offer up to God our spirit, soul, and body, which is our reasonable service, and if we be indeed God's children, we are to feel that, henceforth, we are not our own, for we are bought with a price. We belong wholly to God, all that we are, and all that we have, is to be His through life, and in death, and throughout eternity.

15. *And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering.*

An offering must be presented for us before we can offer ourselves as an offering unto God.

16. *For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel;*

Listen to this, you who trust that you are made like unto the elder brother, and the Firstborn from among the creatures of God;

16-18. *Instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast; on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel.*

God's people are the elect, they have escaped from death. In that day when the sword of the Lord was drawn, they were shielded by the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the lintel and on the two sideposts, and henceforth, because they have been thus preserved, they belong unto the Lord.

19-22. *And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary. And Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel, did to the Levites according unto all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them. And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them as an offering before the LORD; and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them. And after that went the Levites in to do their service in the tabernacle of the*

congregation before Aaron, and before his sons: as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did they unto them.

How instructive all this is to us! We are not to begin blunderingly to serve God while we are yet in our sins—before we have been sprinkled with the blood—before we have been washed in the water which flowed with the blood—before we have felt that razor that takes away from us all our own pride and glory. No, but when all that is done, then there is to be no delay, “After that went the Levites in to do their service.”

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